

PUNCTUALITY.

PUNCTUALITY, or scrupulous exactness as regards appointments to time, is, I find, a very difficult though essential virtue to cultivate in children.

I think that, to a great extent, "unpunctuality" is inherited. If children come of unpunctual, dawdling parents, they are almost sure to be so; partly because of the example no doubt, and also because sufficient effort is not made to eradicate the bad habit. I think, too, that punctuality as regards time may be taken to mean also promptitude, willingness, quickness of decision. Here we get a much wider sense, for surely these virtues all lead to the same result. How it alters the life of a person or child who has been trained in all these qualities. Prompt, willing, eager to obey the word of command as soon as uttered, in fact almost anticipating it. Punctual to the moment at meal-time, at lessons, any appointment, whether for duty or pleasure. Then quick and prompt in the games or work, and there will, I think, be more keenness and eagerness to excel, more enthusiasm; the whole mind and body on the alert to obey, to fulfil the agreement at the appointed time.

What a contrast is this to the child who is always unpunctual. The lessons that must be omitted, the play-time lost; then because for all the mishaps that follow each other in quick succession, excuses are made, ill-nature is shown. Lessons and games are dawdled through, there is no brightness or enjoyment in them for teacher or taught.

I hope things seldom come to such a pass as this, but how essential it is that the children should be punctual, not only as regards time, but in obedience, in truthfulness, in doing little kindnesses.

The child who is punctual will have more time to think of others, and in consequence is likely to become unselfish; whereas the unpunctual one has only time enough to look after himself.

I daresay some people do not look at it in this light, and yet I think I am not far wrong when I maintain that punctuality in its widest sense means all this. And yet, as I said before, how difficult it is to train children in this virtue or moral goodness, I suppose because of its very complexity.

Then again, since it means all this, with what ardour we should

undertake the training of this important habit. If we can set before the children a good example of punctuality, and show them the benefits of the good, and the evil results of the bad habit, who knows but that one day our ideal will be realized. At any rate, we can all do our best "for the children's sake."

E. F.

THE habit of punctuality is very difficult to form in children belonging to a race with whom a tendency to unpunctuality is hereditary, and who, on being told that an appointment will soon be due, untiringly reply, "Ah! there's time enough." The habit of unpunctuality in my children was a great source of trouble, and the cause of so much wasted time, that one week I privately registered every lost minute, and announced the result at the end of the week. It was quite startling, and the only way to set up the contrary habit of punctuality was to put before my children the gravity of the case, and make a rule, that for the future a space of time, out of school-hours, equal in length to the wasted time, should be spent in the work which had been left undone.

Now, a paper, headed with Chaucer's significant words,

"For tyme, ylost, this knowen ye,
By no way may recoveréd be,"

is pinned on our "notice board," whereon, day by day, is recorded the number of minutes which everyone misses during the week.

A great benefit arising from this method of forming the habit of punctuality is that the children know the consequences of being late, and need no further reprimand beyond seeing the registering of the wasted time.

F. M.

WITH regard to punctuality, our subject this month, I have found my boy-pupils so easy to manage in that respect they are always up in time. Not so with the little girl of eleven; everything is left to the last moment. Her great idea is, so long as a thing is done by a certain time it does not matter whether it is begun late. She is so extremely honest about it, if late for breakfast, for instance, and asked why, will answer candidly, "It was my fault to-day," or, as the case may be, "It was not my fault." I shall be so glad to hear of useful hints on this subject, as it seems almost impossible to impress on her that "time" is precious.

E. G. C.